

# AMERICAN EMBASSY'S NATIONAL DAILY PRESS REVIEW

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## Today's Top Stories

1. The question of security in Cote d'Ivoire
2. The electoral campaign ahead of the December 11 parliamentary elections
3. Ivorian refugees in Liberia
4. Human rights issues
5. Reactions following Laurent Gbagbo's first appearance before the ICC
6. Suspension of three newspapers

### **1. The question of security in Cote d'Ivoire**

A prominent headline in *Fraternite Matin* (p. 1) says that "three persons were killed and three others wounded as a rocket fell on a house in the southwestern town of Grand-Lahou. The report (p. 9) quotes the police commissioner in the city as saying that "the origin of the rocket is still unknown." The article also recalls that the region of Grand-Lahou was the theater of fierce fighting between fleeing Liberian mercenaries and government forces during the last post-electoral violence, and quotes area residents as speculating that the rocket might have been fired by the same Liberian mercenaries or by security forces hired by candidates who are campaigning ahead of the upcoming parliamentary elections.

Another front-page headline in *Fraternite Matin* says that an arms cache has been uncovered in Lopou, a neighborhood in the southern Dabou region following a gun fight. The paper (p. 5) attributes this information to the Minister in charge of Defense, Paul Koffi Koffi, during a tour of the region. The minister, the report says, announced an arms-collection operation in order to take guns from people who are illegally holding them. The report also quotes an inhabitant in this area as saying, "The FRCI must ensure our security and not turn their guns against us."

### **2. The electoral campaign ahead of the December 11 parliamentary elections**

A banner headline in *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 1) says: "Grenade attack on the headquarters of the PDCI party in Grand-Lahou." An article in this paper (p. 2) quotes the candidate of the PDCI party in this constituency as saying that "the grenade exploded while many supporters were gathered at the party's headquarters for a meeting." "Drama unfolds at the meeting held by the PDCI party," says a front-page headline in *Soir Info*. Another article in this paper (p. 3) warns candidates campaigning for the upcoming parliamentary elections about the scale of violence ahead of the elections.

“December 11 parliamentary elections: the campaign is stained with blood,” says a prominent headline in *L’Inter* (p. 1). The paper (p. 4) describes an “explosive” situation in the Abidjan neighborhood of Koumassi. Another report (p. 5) says that three people were wounded in the western town of Logouale as supporters of the candidate of the RDR party, who died from burns that he sustained in a fire, assaulted the headquarters of the UDPCI, both members of the governing coalition. The paper (p. 7) also quotes Innocent Anaky Kobena, a candidate in the coming elections, who accuses a military officer of “sowing terror” in the northeastern town of Bouna. Anaky Kobena reportedly said that “Major Issiaka Ouattara, a.k.a Wattao, who is campaigning for one candidate, has threatened another candidate” in this constituency.

### **3. Ivorian refugees in Liberia**

A prominent headline in *L’Inter* (p.1) says that “hundreds of Ivorian refugees have been prevented from returning home.” According to the paper (p. 2) a convoy of 738 persons was expected in Cote d’Ivoire yesterday as part of a tripartite agreement signed between the UNHCR and the governments of Cote d’Ivoire and Liberia. The paper quotes a government official, who blamed the delay of the convoy on “poor security” in the region. However, an insider is reported as saying, “Most of the refugees trying to return home are members of the former ruling FPI party. The parties engaged in the parliamentary elections do not want them to come fearing that the returnees will vote against them.”

Reporting on the same issue, *Le Nouveau Reveil* (p. 1) carries a prominent headline wondering whether “the border with Liberia has been closed.” The paper (p. 7) also quotes the government official in the region, Diarra Karim, who said: “We’ve taken security measures with regard to the electoral campaign.”

### **4. Human rights issues**

A report in *L’Inter* (p. 3) says that UN human rights expert Doudou Diene is expected in Cote d’Ivoire from December 7 through December 13 “to ensure that human rights issues are taken into account during the December 11 parliamentary elections.”

### **5. Reactions following Laurent Gbagbo’s first appearance before the ICC**

The first appearance before the International Criminal Court (ICC) of former Ivorian strongman Laurent Gbagbo continues to be the subject of front-page stories in the Ivorian press. “Gbagbo is a torturer and not a victim,” says a prominent headline in *Le Patriote* (p. 1). A comment in this paper (p. 3) suggests that the transfer of Gbagbo to The Hague must serve as “a lesson” for future generations. Through Laurent Gbagbo, the international community wanted to send a message that “the era of bloodthirsty kinglets and other untouchable leaders is over,” the paper added.

Another prominent headline in *Le Nouveau Courrier* (p. 1) hints that Ivorians are to collect money to pay Gbagbo’s defense lawyers. The paper, which believes that Gbagbo has a “chance to freely return home from The Hague,” hints that the question of whether or not Prime Minister Guillaume Soro will be dragged before the ICC will be determined next week in New York. Another article in this paper (p. 2) denounces Charles Konan Banny’s “disturbing silence” over “the deportation of Gbagbo.” The article claims that Banny, the Chairman of the Dialogue, Truth

and Reconciliation Commission, has kept mute over Gbagbo's transfer to the ICC and recent disruptions of opposition rallies in the country.

## 6. Suspension of three newspapers

A front-page headline in *Notre Voie* announces the suspension of opposition newspapers Le Temps and Aujourd'hui, along with Le Mandat, a daily affiliated with the Parti Démocratique de Côte d'Ivoire (PDCI) by the CNP, the state print media regulatory body. The paper denounces "a crackdown" on the freedom of the press in Cote d'Ivoire. "They punish us because of our support for Gbagbo," the paper (*p. 8*) quotes Joseph Titi, publisher of Aujourd'hui as saying.

### Media affiliation and circulation

Fraternite Matin	State-owned daily newspaper	23,000
L'Intelligent d'Abidjan	Privately-owned daily, leans pro-President Alassane Ouattara	7,000
L'Inter	Independent daily	20,000
Nord-Sud Quotidien	Daily close to Prime Minister Guillaume Soro	10,000
Notre Voie	Daily close to the FPI, the party of Former President Laurent Gbagbo	15,000
Le Nouveau Courrier	Daily close to the FPI, the party of Former President Laurent Gbagbo	10,000
Le Nouveau Reveil	Daily close to the PDCI-RDA, the party of Former President Henri Konan Bedie	17,000
Le Patriote	Daily close to the RDR, the party of President Alassane Ouattara	17,000
RTI TV	State-owned broadcaster	
Soir Info	Independent daily	22,000

**NOTE:** Newspaper circulation figures represent the number of copies printed, not actual sales.